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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

On the 5th of June, following the tragic events in China, I took action to guard against the chance that any Chinese student would be forcibly returned to face persecution.

Today I re-emphasize my commitment -- as I have told Chinese students in America, and as I have told Congress -- to never allow any action that would force the return of Chinese students if their lives or liberty are at risk. Because of this firm commitment, I am supportive of the humanitarian principles underlying H.R. 2712.

For these same humanitarian reasons, I have today taken administrative action that will offer the same protections as those provided for in H.R. 2712. I have instructed the Attorney General to take the steps necessary to extend administratively to all Chinese students in the United States the same benefits that H.R. 2712 would have extended. In addition, last June I exercised my authority to provide opportunity for employment to a wider class of Chinese aliens than the bill would have required. And -- going further than the bill's provisions concerning asylum cases arising in connection with policies of forced abortion and coerced sterilization -- I have also instructed the Attorney General to ensure that, rather than single out one country, this provision is implemented administratively and in such a way as to offer this protection to all foreign nationals, regardless of their country of origin.

Because these administrative steps make it unnecessary, I have at the same time disapproved H.R. 2712. My Administration has opposed Congressional micromanagement of foreign policy. Such legislation puts America in a straitjacket and can render us incapable of responding to changing circumstances. H.R. 2712 is inconsistent with this policy.

Chinese and other foreign visitors should know that this is not an expedient or temporary action, but one reflecting fundamental American humanitarian values. I will always adhere to the principle that no one will be returned forcibly to a country where he or she faces persecution. America will always stand with freedom-loving men and women around the world.

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